

DETAIL OF A PLAN

FOR THE

MORAL IMPROVEMENT

OF

NEGROES ON PLANTATIONS.

READ BEFORE THE GEORGIA PRESBYTERY.

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PRINTED

AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRESBYTERY.

1833.

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*What is the Best Mode of Improving the Moral Condition  
of our Negroes?*

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THE consideration of this question was assigned me by the GEORGIA PRESBYTERY at its meeting held in Bryan County, the 4th of January, 1833.

Our attention is called to this subject at this moment, not only by the serious bearing which the moral improvement of this class of our population must have on their own welfare, and the good order of society at large, but by the demand throughout the Southern Country for information on this most interesting topic. This inquiry ought to be met and satisfied as far as practicable. We must collect the results of the experience of judicious, humane planters, and learn from them the course they have adopted. We must not suffer the solicitude so generally manifested about the situation and destinies of our negroes, to abate for want of knowledge, if that knowledge can be obtained and disseminated. To us who believe in the duty and practicability of improving their condition, it seems a great advance in the public sentiment that the capability of receiving moral impressions is granted, and the efforts of the philanthropists, who have wrought this state of feeling, tolerated. The capacity of the negro to receive moral instruction and form a moral character, is at this time too generally admitted to call for any discussion. Our inquiry, then, is limited to the best mode of communicating that instruction, and forming that character.

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The several modes of accomplishing these objects of which I shall speak are, 1. By preaching on the Sabbath. 2. Sabbath Schools, to be taught orally. 3. Evening meetings, to be conducted either by associations, agents, or masters, acting independently of each other. 4. Daily domestic instruction for adults and children by their owners. 5. Religious discipline by the church. 6. Temperance Societies. 7. By a well arranged and regularly enforced system of Plantation discipline.

I. I shall speak of the *instruction* they should receive. The most prominent method of imparting knowledge to them orally, is by preaching in large assemblies on the Sabbath. They should be permitted and encouraged to attend on public worship. No work, or plantation regulation, should prevent their attendance. The duty and advantage of assembling at the house of God should be forcibly set before them. A portion of the church should be provided with comfortable seats for their accommodation; and the preacher should remember that they are present, and adapt, at least, a part of his discourse to their intellectual and moral wants. He will also generally find that those sermons which have been best understood by his black audience, were the most improving to the whites. As they have no books, the hymns should be given out by one or two lines, that they may join in the exercises. They are prone to go in and out during service—this should be discountenanced, and their punctuality, stillness, and attention, commended. A devout regard for the house, and respect for the proprieties of public worship, should be inculcated.

## II. Sabbath Schools in church.

Beside the services on which both whites and blacks attend, there should be one especially intended for the latter. This should be conducted in a more familiar and colloquial manner. At this meeting, which may be held in the church during the intermission of the regular worship, or after it is concluded for the day, statements can be made, and illustrations used, that would be unsuitable from the pulpit, before a mixed audience of the educated and illiterate. A hymn should be read and sung while they are assembling, followed by a portion of Scripture, read and explained; preference being always given to the parables, and biographical parts, in which they seem most interested. After reading and explaining the selection, read distinctly and emphatically, one verse, or a part of one, then ask some question on the verse,

and let it be as simple as possible, containing but one thought or proposition, and pointing directly to the answer. Take, for example, this verse,—‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ First explain what it is to be blessed. Next describe the poor in spirit, and what is meant by the kingdom of heaven. The teacher will then repeat the first clause of the verse—‘Blessed are the poor in spirit,’ and ask, ‘Who does the Lord say are blessed?’ The answer is too obvious to be mistaken by them. He will likewise read the last clause and ask, ‘What does the Lord say shall be theirs?’ This method will spare them the embarrassment of calling too many faculties of the mind into exercise at once. It demands only attention and memory, which, in the order of nature, must always precede *thinking*; the last, most difficult, and highest exercise of the human mind.

The most striking advantages attending this catechetical mode of instruction are these:—their attention is secured, for they must listen in order to reply; the teacher is required to simplify his instruction, to meet their understanding; the repetition of the proposition aloud in the form of an answer assists the memory; it furnishes them with language for religious conversation; and lastly, it certifies the teacher of their attention.

To attain these advantages, much patience must be exercised by the teacher. He must administer encouragement rather than reproof, and his manner should be kind and animated; much depends upon this—he must remember that his class is learning directly from him, by imitation and sympathy, as well as by repeating his words and receiving his thoughts. Where this method has been pursued, a marked interest has been observed among the negroes; their attendance at church and sabbath schools has been more regular. They love to learn when their way is made so easy, and are evidently encouraged by their progress. The teacher may avail himself of this meeting, to reprove their prevailing vices, give them just ideas of church discipline, and enforce the virtues peculiarly becoming their situation. It is desirable that laymen should engage in this department of christian duty. Under their management and instruction, the plan may well assume the form of a Sabbath school, the teacher of each class adopting the above method. This is especially important in those districts of country where there is no settled clergyman, thus ensuring their public instruction on the Sabbath, which might otherwise be entirely neglected. In-

deed, in such situations it would be well to employ Missionaries. The Methodist Conference of South Carolina has, at the request of planters, established several missions, which have been quite successful, and afforded great satisfaction to the gentlemen at whose request they were instituted. I would mention particularly those on the Santee, Pon-Pon, and the neighborhood of Beaufort, as being better acquainted with their results.

The Georgia Conference has this year appointed Missionaries for the Savannah and Ogechee rivers, at the solicitation of planters owning property on them. The Missionary for the Ogechee has commenced his labors with very encouraging prospects; no objection has been made by any planter to his preaching, and he has been highly gratified by the interest manifested by the negroes.

III. Evening meetings on the plantations where they reside. These may be conducted by the members of Associations formed for the religious instruction of the negroes or by their agents, or by individual planters. For these meetings the consent of the owner must be obtained; his attendance should always be requested, as it will afford countenance and respectability to the evangelical labors of the teacher. And to prevent their being made the occasion of idle visiting or noisy assemblages, it is not best that they should be gathered from more than one plantation, especially in those neighborhoods where the plantations are large.

The meeting should be held as early in the evening as possible, and should not be continued late. The method of instruction should be similar to that recommended for the Sabbath school. Where christian masters are alive to this important subject, this field of labor should be occupied by them. It would be expecting too much of the minister, to leave this whole business to him; and alone, he could accomplish but little. He should however take his part of the labor, by conducting, for instance, one such meeting every week. He may aid the cause by bringing it before his people, both in the pulpit and during his pastoral visits. The duty of evangelizing the negroes should not be overlooked by him in his notices of the obligation of christians to send the Gospel to the destitute and heathen. Every christian master and teacher in the Southern Country should devote at least one evening in the week to visiting the negroes on the plantations around him, destitute of religious instruction. The visiting teacher should inquire of the most responsible

negro, the character and conduct of the others ; these inquiries will excite an additional sense of responsibility, and the information thus derived will enable the teacher to give suitable reproof and encouragement, and aid the cause of plantation discipline.

If this system were carried into effect generally, it would do more for the good order and quiet of the country, than any civil or military patrol we have ever had. Where it has been established even partially, its beneficial results have been obvious and well attested.

IV. The last method of instruction I would mention, is domestic, to be conducted by the resident planter and his family. Here the instruction of the adults should be first considered. Where it is practicable, they should be assembled every evening in the week ; and where their numbers warrant it, they should meet in a well-lighted room, appropriated to the purpose, with comfortable seats.

The instruction should be communicated in a manner similar to that at the Sabbath school for adults, above described. Supposing them to occupy benches, which are capable of accommodating eight or ten persons, and these benches arranged one behind another, that in front should be filled by a different set every evening, each set in its turn ; and the same individuals should always sit together, each bench being provided with a monitor, whose duty it should be to report the absent ; and excuses for absence should be required the following evening after meeting. This disposition of seats, by bringing each individual in his turn immediately under the eye of the teacher, will greatly promote the attention of his hearers.

The time of meeting should be regulated in a great measure by the convenience of the persons to be instructed ; as soon after dark, however, as is practicable, would be expedient, lest they should become sleepy ; and the duration of the meeting should depend upon the degree of interest manifested. It should seldom or never exceed half an hour. At this meeting the practical duties of religion may be forcibly presented ; the intimate knowledge the teacher possesses of their character and conduct enabling him to adapt his instruction to each individual ; to point out and reprove his faults, show how he has been led to wrong, and present the precepts of the Gospel, with its motives to repentance and obedience. Here also the master gives pledges before God of his interest in the well-being of his servants. Here he feels his own accounta-

bility to God, for their moral and religious improvement, and here they, in their turn, learn to exercise a degree of confidence in him, which their common intercourse would not inspire. The benefits arising from attendance on evening prayers, in a disciplinary point of view, are manifold. The people are all required to be at home every evening, about the time when, without some such regulation, they would be disposed to be abroad visiting. They are thus spared much exposure and injury to health, and much temptation to mischief and immorality. Being detained at home, they become more interested in making it comfortable, notice their children more, and are less burdened with company, which to them is the occasion of some expense. The service should be attended with great punctuality by the teacher; no ordinary matter should cause him to fail. If possible to avoid it, he should never disappoint the people, or keep them waiting, remembering that in this duty, he is 'servant of all.'

The most effectual mode, however, of improving the moral condition of the blacks, is by instructing their *children*; early instruction exercises as great an influence on their manners, dispositions, and morals, as on any class of beings in the world; and in them, we must check that current of vice and impurity, which for ages has been the inheritance of this degraded race. Through them, too, we may hope to exert a salutary influence on their parents. Seeing their children better than themselves, they will make an effort not to hinder their progress in virtue by their own corrupt example, and will become ashamed of faults which a child may reprove.

The children should be collected daily at some convenient hour in the morning, and if the engagements of the teacher do not interfere, again in the afternoon. As the larger children take care of the smaller, it is not convenient to divide them into classes, and at the commencement of a system of instruction, they are all equally ignorant. They should be assembled at a place where they will be exposed to little interruption, and with few objects to distract their attention. They should be required to come with clean faces and hands, and with their clothes in a decent condition. The benches for their use should be placed on three sides of the room, in not more than double rows. The arrangement of seats usual in an infant school is the very best for this class of learners. To those acquainted with the method of teaching pursued in Infant Schools, I would say, imitate that as nearly as the nature of the case will permit. Hymns, Scripture Cards, the

Commandments, parables, and other select portions of Scripture, especially such texts as reprove their prevailing faults, are the most suitable lessons. The correctness of their ear in measuring time, and fondness for music, render it comparatively easy to teach them hymns and tunes adapted.

The teacher, whom we suppose to be one of the females of the family, should not continue the lessons till her own patience, or that of the children is exhausted. The school at first, should not be over fifteen or twenty minutes in duration. The lessons, hymns, commandments, &c. should be taught and repeated in a fixed order; this will aid the memory in recalling them, and allow the school to be carried on in the absence of the teacher under the superintendence of a faithful negro, who may keep order while the children repeat their lessons in regular course. It is highly important that the children should be assembled every day, even when the teacher is absent. The constant repetition of the lesson deepens the impression on their memories, and especially assists the younger children whose progress has been slow.

The advantages arising from daily assembling and instructing the children, are most obvious to those who are engaged in carrying this plan into operation, and have witnessed its success. Quarrelling and fighting, lying and indecency, are very much checked; they become civil and respectful, and examples to the older negroes of peaceable, decent, and orderly conduct. There are five schools on this plan in Bryan County. One has been taught during the winter, and kept together during the summer for several years, the others only a few months. The interest excited by these schools in the children of the neighboring plantations, has made the progress of those last established, more rapid than was the improvement of the first. Sabbath schools should be established on those plantations where it is not practicable to assemble the children during the week. They can be taught in the morning before service, and again in the afternoon. Much has already been effected by them, both in cities and in the country, and teachers in white Sabbath schools should feel it their duty not to neglect this class of children.\*

#### V. Religious discipline by the church.

When enlightened by the preaching of the Gospel, and by more familiar and domestic instruction, upon good evidence

\* Six Sabbath schools have been in operation in Bryan County for more than a year; the teachers testify to the improving aptness to learn, manifested by the children, and their own increasing interest in them.



of their information upon christian principles, our servants should be received into the church of Christ. It is desirable that they should be connected with the same body to which their masters belong, that the rich and poor may meet alike before the Lord, who is the Maker of them all. They should, however, be permitted to choose their denomination. They should not be admitted hastily; the reason of the hope that is in them should be examined, and the way of God carefully expounded to them. Great care should be taken in conversation and preaching, to show them the difference between an awakened conscience and conversion; they are often excited to remorse and fear, by dreams and imaginary sights, superstitiously interpreted. We should avail ourselves of this anxiety, and direct them to the true ground of fear, and also of peace and hope, thus making the Gospel displace superstition. Previous to their admission to the church, they should be put on probation; testimony to their conduct being received from their master and fellow-servants. Thus teaching them that religion does not consist in a barren profession, but in a correct and holy life and conversation. Church membership exerts a great social influence on their character, being esteemed by them not only an evidence of approved piety, but of general respectability; and as there are no grades of society among them, good standing in the church is almost the only distinction enjoyed. Great care must be taken lest this social feeling and desire for distinction, fill the church with unworthy members, and convert it into an arena for the exercise of intrigue for power and influence among themselves. This has too often been the case. The discipline of the Methodist Episcopal church seems well adapted to their situation. Accordingly, we find that, with some modifications, it has been adapted for their colored members, by several Baptist and Presbyterian churches. On each plantation there should be a watchman or steward, whose office it should be, to admonish his charge, and report their conduct to the church and minister, or the white superintendent. A strict eye should be kept on this watchman, that he does not domineer over his charge, or cherish any thing of a party spirit in his dealings towards them, or secretly circulate among them principles and practices discountenanced by their instructor.

#### VI. Formation of Temperance Societies.

Another mode of improving the moral condition of the negroes is by the formation of Temperance Societies among them, and using all fair means to induce them to join. They have

suffered their full share from the vice of drunkenness, and masters have, by their example, encouraged it. Since the introduction of slaves into this country, it has been the established usage for masters to furnish them with ardent spirits on various occasions, especially at the Christmas holidays; and as a reward for extra work. It now becomes them to do something to remedy the mischief—they should cease to supply their slaves with ardent spirits themselves, and present every motive which kindness can suggest, or authority afford, to put an end to the use of them. Temperance Societies, voluntarily joined, have been found a powerful auxiliary to the more direct efforts of the master. Much aid in the promotion of temperance may be derived from good plantation regulations, of which we shall hereafter speak. The society in Bryan has existed three years, and has four hundred members, among whom but two cases have been reported of broken pledges. The Baptist church of Bryan, to which most of our negroes, who are church members, unite themselves, refuses to admit any to fellowship, except under the pledge of total abstinence from ardent spirits. Those who have joined the temperance society, testify warmly to its beneficial influence upon their character and happiness. One said, ‘Before I became a member, I could keep no provisions in my house; mine and my children’s were sold to buy rum; but now we have a plenty.’ Another who had been to all appearance, a confirmed sot, acknowledges that it has been the means of saving his life, and only wishes it had existed ten years ago. It is generally remarked by them, that these societies must be the work of God, so much good has resulted from them.

VII. The last general head to be treated of, is *plantation discipline*.

It cannot be too seriously borne in mind, that without attention to this, the success of the various regulations previously suggested, cannot be ensured. Under this head, I shall first consider the supply of their physical wants, food, clothing and dwellings; and then, their labor, encouragements, and punishments.

The master is called on both by humanity and interest to provide a sufficient supply of food for his slave; let him look into this, and not be satisfied that his negro has enough, because he gets his allowance. From various causes, this is often not adequate to the support of a laboring man. The quantity allowed by custom is a peck of corn per week, and if it be sound flint corn, this is sufficient to sustain health and

strength under moderate labor. But there is often a defect here, the quantity is then insufficient ; and who should be astonished, if the negro takes from the field or corn-house, the supply necessary for his craving appetite, and then justifies his act, and denies that it is stealing. It is a common statement made by intelligent negroes, that without the aid of their own gardens, poultry-houses, and corn-fields, their allowance would not hold out. Should the quality of corn be poor, let them have their food by weight, giving not less than 14 pounds per week of corn. The allowance should on no occasion be given on the Sabbath ; besides being a violation of God's law, it interferes with attendance at church. It should be given on stated days, the same day every week ; time should be allowed the negroes for receiving their provisions, neither should they be delayed after a hard day's work until late at night. They should be allowed to participate in the fruit of their labor ; when rice and sugar constitute the crop, a portion should be retained for their use. To be permitted to share in the crop, will encourage them to work, and this change of food may be made to promote their honesty. If the negro is informed, that if he does not steal, he shall receive rice as an allowance, and if he does steal, he shall not, a motive is held out which will counteract the temptation to pilfer.\*

*Clothing.* Their clothes should always be sufficient for the comfort and decent appearance of the negroes. There is but a shade between moral purity and modesty, and if the defence of the latter be removed, the former will be greatly endangered. The want of decent clothing is often urged as a reason for not going to church.

It is customary to give two suits of clothes annually, one in the spring, the other in the autumn ; these should be given in proper seasons, that the people may have the comfort of a dress suited to the time of the year. The winter clothes should be given in November, and those for summer, in April or May. This is often neglected, and consequently the improvident, (of whom the number is very great,) suffer much ; and, however well a negro may endure the cold when at work, or sitting by his fire-side, the want of warm clothing would be considered a good reason for not attending church. They

\* I have for the two or three years past, notified our people, that when they ceased to steal rice, I would give it to them occasionally as an allowance. It is now two years since any one has been detected stealing it ; in consequence of which, I have given them the promised reward, and shall continue to do so once a month, a half allowance each time. Should any one be discovered offending in this matter at any future time, besides the ordinary punishment, he would be deprived of his allowance of rice.

should be required to keep their clothes whole and clean, and in order to enforce this duty, let failures in these points be punished by the refusal of any favor which they may ask, especially if it be to visit other plantations. Those who have no one to mend or make for them, ought to be aided by the master. We should notice their appearance, commend neatness, and reprove the opposite, and punish it where evidently wilful.

A subject not less important presents itself in the *dwelling*s of the negro, and until greater attention is paid to this subject, it will be impossible to inculcate and maintain that regard for decency, which is so essential to good morals. Our physical habits have a vast influence on our moral; neither can they be entirely separated. Man is a physical as well as a moral being, and this fact must always be kept in view in our endeavors to give elevation to his character. Should we fail to do this, the subjects of our philanthropy, will point out the inconsistency and distrust our sincerity. These reflections are strikingly applicable to the evils obviously arising from the mode of lodging in negro houses. Too many individuals of different sexes are crowded into one house, and the proper separation of apartments cannot be observed. That they are familiar with these inconveniences, and insensible to the evils arising from them, does not, in the least, lessen the unhappy consequences in which they result. And we should remember that the Gospel, on whose principles and precepts we rely for success, commands us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the houseless, as well as preach to the poor. The dwellings of the negro should be arranged in some order favorable to the circulation of air, and to the cleanliness both of the paths leading to them, and of the surrounding ground. If placed too near, there is danger of destruction by fire, and a want of free ventilation; and quarrels among the adjacent families are often fomented by this circumstance. What is said in one house is overheard in the next, and repeated to some one who may feel hurt by it. Hence arises a strong objection to double houses in which two families, with all their opposite interests and antipathies, are brought into contact. Should any report be spread prejudicial to one of the families, it is immediately charged upon the other; in like manner all losses by theft or otherwise, are constantly traced to the neighboring tenement, while endless disputes and fighting occur among the children.

They should be required to keep their houses clean by

washing the floors at least once a week, and sweeping every day. If they are neatly built and white-washed, not only is the appearance better, but the inhabitants will feel disposed to take more care of them. In each house, there should be such an arrangement by means of partitions, as to furnish separate apartments for the larger boys and girls. Nothing will tend more decidedly to instil sentiments of decency and moral purity, than this separation, and the evidence which it furnishes them of our solicitude on these subjects. As the family increases, the house should be enlarged, for it is far better that the children should remain, until marriage, under the parental roof, than take up their lodgings elsewhere, merely from the want of room at home.

When practicable, a portion of land adjacent to each house, should be given them, as a garden lot, in which vegetables may be raised, fruit trees planted, and bee hives, poultry houses, and pig pens placed. These matters require the frequent personal inspection of master or overseer. In our efforts to improve the *moral condition* of our negroes, we must not forget their *comforts* nor their *sensibilities*, but by the structure and arrangement of their dwellings, endeavor to promote both their health and domestic peace and order. The old saying among planters, that, 'the more we do for our slaves, the less they will do for themselves,' is not true, when what is done for them, is only by way of assisting them to do for themselves, and not as a substitute for their own exertions.

*Regulations for the care of the sick.*—The diseases of negroes are generally simple in their nature, and only require good nursing to remove them. When the number on a plantation warrants it, the time of one person should be given up to attendance on the sick. In some situations it is deemed necessary to have hospitals. Where these are established, care should be taken to keep them clean, and well supplied with articles of comfort, that the invalid may not feel the privation of those he has been accustomed to enjoy in his own house. As in a sparse population the residence of the physician must be remote from many of the settlements, it is advisable that every plantation should be well supplied with the medicines in ordinary use. This is too frequently neglected, —many plantations are even destitute of salts, the cheapest and simplest of all medicines. The master should see the sick every day, visiting them at their houses or at the hospital; and however unacquainted with the science of medicine,

he will soon be able to detect the cases of feigned sickness, and to ascertain for whom the aid of a physician is necessary. Such kindness will exert a good moral influence.

*Regulation of the work.*—Where a number of hands are employed together, and the nature of the work varying somewhat every day, it would be nearly impossible to give to every individual a task exactly suited to his capacity for labor; some general apportionment must be made. And here, great judgment and experience are necessary, to guard against the evil of cvertasking on the one hand, and requiring too little labor on the other. Where negroes are overworked, their seasons of relaxation are often marked by extreme licentiousness, drunkenness, and debauchery; the mind swings from violent pressure into boundless indulgence. On the other hand, where there is a deficiency of regular employment, idle and vagrant habits arise. It is, therefore, best to classify the hands, putting the feeble together, and the able in another set,—giving the men the work requiring most labor and exposure. Let the people understand, that they will every day be expected to do a good day's work, except where abatement is intentionally made, and that the work being harder or easier, is not a matter of accident. Upon this principle, where the work requires extra exertion, something must be abated of the usual apportionment, and where it requires but little effort, some addition may be made. By adopting this rule, we secure several advantages; the negro does not relax his efforts when he has a hard task, because he is sure it cannot be finished, nor hurry carelessly through an easy one, that he may gain the more time; he acquires greater uniformity in his habits of labor, his spirits are not broken by great inequality of exertion, and he learns to confide in the judgment and humanity of his master or overseer. Much time will be saved to the master, by this arrangement of tasks: the slave will be in good spirits and strength for labor *every day*, and, as the great occasion of running away is a season of excessive labor immediately following one of great ease, all loss of time originating from this cause is avoided. A judicious arrangement of the work, and adequate supply for the physical wants of the slave, will be attended by influences highly favorable to his moral culture, as well as conducive to his present happiness. He has no intellectual cravings to disturb his quiet, and his habitual dependence upon the hand that meets his daily necessities, suspends all uneasiness about the future.

*Regulations for families.*—Marriages should be encour-

aged. Injudicious connexions should be forbidden, the master inquiring into the character of the parties, before giving his consent to their union. He should be present at the marriage ceremony, and bestow on the party and their friends, some testimonials of his approbation, and interest in their happiness. He should investigate all disputes between man and wife, which may threaten the peace of the family: and the fear of this interference will often induce mutual forbearance, when, without this salutary consideration, their disagreement would break out into open strife. They should be forbidden to strike each other, and the husband especially should be restrained from exercising his authority over his wife in this way, which they are apt to consider an indefeasible right. All disputes should first be brought to the Driver, and if he cannot restore peace, let the Master or Overseer interfere. His manner should be dispassionate and deliberate, and when the fault has arisen from bad temper, the best mode of treating the case is to confine the offender in solitude every night, until good will be restored on both sides. Parents should not be allowed to punish their children severely, and when they violate this rule, they should be forbidden to punish at all, and required to complain to the Driver.

Christian parents ought to be impressed with their religious obligations towards their children; should be taught the importance of setting them a good example, abstaining from indecent and irreverent language and conduct, praying with them every day, and teaching them to pray. They may also aid the efforts of the Master for the improvement of their children, by encouraging and commanding them to attend to the instruction provided for them.

*Good neighborhood* is promoted by dividing the plantation into sections containing four or five families, and appointing the most orderly and respectable negro in each section as a supervisor, to interfere for the restoration of peace in case of quarrels, and to give notice to the Driver, if the disputants continue obstinate. Quarrels thus early noticed, may be suppressed without resorting to harsh measures, which might otherwise be necessary.

*Particular attention* should be paid to the manner in which they *treat animals*. They are prone to abuse, to overwork, and to beat them severely. They should be taught that 'a merciful man is merciful to his beast,' and reminded of the peculiar claims to their compassion, presented by those who stand in the same relation to them, that they hold to their

masters: and, as they expect kind treatment from their masters, so should they extend the same to the creatures submitted to their power. They should not be permitted to keep dogs, hogs, &c. unless they can afford to feed them sufficiently, without stinting themselves and children. One of the greatest pests on a plantation, is a pack of mangy, starving curs: they steal to escape starvation, and are then most unmercifully beaten: the children, seeing the cruelty of their parents, soon learn to imitate them, and both children and parents vent upon the poor animals, that passion which has been excited by some object beyond their power.

*Crimes and Punishments.*—Under this article we should first consider, the investigation of charges. The negro suspected, or charged with an act of immorality, or the violation of any plantation rule, should have a fair trial. Let justice be done, and let him feel that it will. A very suitable time for examining cases that require much investigation, is after evening prayers, when the negroes are all assembled. If the accused be innocent, the presence of his fellow-servants will inspire confidence, and his acquittal will establish his innocence publicly. If guilty, he will receive not only the sentence of his master, but the concurrent condemnation of those in whose countenance he might have expected comfort and support. On these occasions great patience and impartiality should be exercised, that the negroes may learn, that their acquittal must be the result of innocence, and not of ingenuity in concealing their faults, and it is highly important that this impression should be made not only on the accused, but on all present. I have heard of two large plantations, the management of which was particularly good, where no negro was punished except by the verdict of a number of his fellow slaves, who acted as jurors. Publicity of trial tends to establish among them a sense of character, which will do more towards the restraint of vice and crime, than can be effected alone, by any mode of punishment.

There are several prevailing errors connected with crime and punishment, in the present system of plantation discipline. And first, there exists a wrong scale of crime. Offences against the master are more severely punished than violations of the law of God, or faults which affect the slave's personal character or good. As examples, we may notice that running away, is more severely punished than adultery, and idleness, than Sabbath breaking and swearing; and stealing



from the master, than defrauding a fellow slave. Under the influence of such a code as this, it cannot be a matter of surprise that the negro forms false estimates of the comparative criminality of actions. And further, the general mode of inflicting punishment, tends to confound these distinctions. The whip is the general instrument of correction, and so long as a negro is whipped without discrimination for neglect of work, for stealing, lying, Sabbath breaking and swearing, he will very naturally class them all together as belonging to the same grade of guilt. In a good code of discipline, the punishment will always be suited to the nature and enormity of the crime; and it is highly important that this measure should be well adjusted, for the common people will judge of the criminality of the act by the nature and extent of the punishment.

Another error is obvious in the defective presentation of the design of punishment. The negro is seldom taught to feel, that he is punished for breaking God's law. He only knows his *master* as lawgiver and executioner, and the sole object of punishment held up to his view, is to make him a more obedient and profitable slave. He oftener hears that he shall be punished if he steals, than if he breaks the Sabbath, or swears; and thus he sees the very threatenings of God brought to bear on his master's interests. It is very manifest to him, that his own good is very far from forming the primary reason for his chastisement: his master's interests are to be secured at all events;—God's claims are secondary, or enforced merely for the purpose of advancing those of his owner. His own benefit is the residuum after this double distillation of moral motive—a mere accident.

The civil offences of negroes are too often punished on the plantation, instead of being prosecuted according to law. They should be taught that they are subject to the laws of the State, both when they violate those laws, and when they are violated in their person. The fear of corporal punishment, is the only motive peculiar to a system of slavery; but if we desire to promote right conduct, for its moral, not pecuniary advantage, moral motives must be exhibited, for the character of an action partakes primarily of the nature of its motive. Should the fear of punishment alone deter the slave from stealing, he would still be destitute of the principle of honesty—of that which constitutes a moral trait in his forbearance to take what belongs to another. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,' and the love of God is the fulfilling of the

law ;—and morality based on these two sentiments, is eternal as the object that awakens them. This object is unchangeable and everlasting. Not so those systems which are founded upon the fear of man. Physical suffering and restraint, however, must still enter into a system of discipline intended for beings of a compound nature. As men commit immoral actions from physical motives, so immorality may be punished, and morality encouraged, by considerations appealing to the senses. To combine the influence of physical and moral motive, and prevent the debasing effect of physical correction alone, the offender must be taught the true object of punishment—that it is awarded to crime by the eternal law of God ; not inflicted in the spirit of revenge, but designed for reformation and warning, and to awaken the mind to this reflection, that ‘ the way of transgressors is hard.’ The custom of punishing negroes on suspicion, and to extort confession, tends to confound their ideas of justice. They learn to feel that their exemption from punishment is the result of cunning, or chance, and not of innocence ; it lessens their respect for their master and his law, and is death to any sentiment originating in the value of character. In whatever mode punishment is administered, no passion should be exhibited ; it will only exasperate the culprit, diminish his sense of guilt, and sustain his spirit. It should ever be felt a degradation for a master to punish his slave in anger ; the manifestation of bad temper on the part of the master, will certainly defeat any moral influence he may intend to exert. Corporal punishments, which are always degrading, should very rarely be inflicted in public, and *never* if the negro manifests penitence. This exhibition either hardens the spectators, or awakens sympathy for the guilty. The modes of correction I would recommend are, solitary confinement by night, separation from the other negroes by day, and the privation of such extra allowance as may be bestowed for the encouragement of industry and good conduct. The benefits of solitary confinement in reforming the depraved, and awakening a moral sense in the degraded, have been fully proved in our modern penitentiaries. It is earnestly recommended that every slave-holder who may have it in his power, should visit a penitentiary managed according to the Auburn system : he will there learn the best methods of reforming the vicious, controlling the unruly, and making the idle industrious. The objects of punishment, reformation and example, should not be forgotten : let reproof and chas-

tisement be so administered, that the negroes may see that their good as well as the master's interest is regarded by him.

*Encouragements to good conduct and industry.*—Encouragement does not enter much into the discipline of plantations, as at present conducted. To be let alone, when the master's task is done, is the only condition offered as an inducement to the industry necessary to accomplish it, or to secure an exemption from the punishment due for the neglect of it. Masters do not sufficiently acquaint themselves with the wants of their negroes. They are too prone to think them well supplied, when they have received their clothes and allowance, particularly if the pint of salt once a month is not forgotten. To know what is wanting to the comfort of his negro, let him visit his house during a hard shower, and stand just where it leaks,—or call in on a pleasant day, and take a seat on his bench, hang his hat on the nail, or place it on the table or dresser, drink water from his pail and calabash,—see if he has plates and spoons, and look where he sleeps—send to purchase his eggs and poultry, and ask what he wishes in return. Let this course be adopted, and the master will not long remain ignorant of the means suitable to the encouragement of his slave in honesty, industry, cleanliness and domestic habits. The possession and increase of personal and domestic comforts, are the safest pledge that the slave will be faithful to the interests of his master, particularly when he has acquired them by the kind assistance of his master—I say *assistance*, for he will value them more if they are partly the fruit of his own exertion : neither would it be expedient to furnish him with these comforts, before he had made some effort to obtain them ; for, if given before he wants them, they will be destroyed by neglect and abuse. These favors, however trifling they may appear to us, will exert a happy influence on the negro, as well as expand the benevolence of the master ; their tendency is to change the position in which master and slave severally stand to each other. The present economy of the slave system is, to get all you can from the slave, and give in return as little as will barely support him in working condition. Where there is not direct intention to infringe his comforts, they are but little consulted, and seeing his master wholly engrossed by his own advantage, he naturally adopts the same selfish course, and when not restrained by higher principles, becomes deceitful and thievish, and as it is generally taken for granted, that the negro will steal and lie, and

his master takes no pains to conceal his suspicions, he feels when tempted to do either, that he has no character to lose.

The first *encouragement* I would mention, is the assigning tasks that can be accomplished with a reasonable amount of labor, and within seasonable hours. When the negro finds his work can be done without a painful effort, he labors with cheerfulness, and the field resounds with his song and lively talk. On his return home, he is not too tired to carry a turn of wood to warm and enliven his house; he can do a little in his own garden, and look after his poultry, pigs, &c. When the hour for *evening prayers* arrives, he has not the excuse for neglecting attendance which severe labor would afford, and while there, he is not unfitted for listening to the words of eternal life.

The next regulation for their encouragement, is a more specific allowance of time for their own purposes, such as, occasionally a day to plant, or till, or reap their crops. It is, however, better to give them statedly a portion of every Saturday. The time allowed on that day may be made to depend on their general good conduct and industry through the week. It should supersede the necessity on their part, of doing any work for themselves on the Sabbath, either in their fields, or in getting wood, or grinding at the mill. And it is important that they should understand that this privilege is granted, expressly to aid their attendance on Church, as well as to reward diligence. This may also be made the most efficient inducement to attend evening prayers: at Richmond plantation, no compulsion is used to enforce attendance, but those who absent themselves more than twice during the week, without assigning a good reason, are deprived of these privileges; and consequently many attend who feel no religious interest in the service.

In the summer, when their crops need their care, half work may be given on Saturday, and in winter, when the time would be less advantageously employed by them and less conveniently spared by the master, two thirds of the usual task.

Another very great encouragement to habits of industry, economy, honesty and temperance, is afforded by the masters' keeping on hand for their trade, all, or most of the articles which they wish to purchase. He would of course keep no ardent spirits, and let him not suppose, that therefore his negroes will not trade with him. If he have a Temperance Society on his plantation, or has encouraged his people join-

ing a more general one,—if he will sell at no more than cost and charges, and take their corn, poultry, &c. at the fair market price, he will lose no custom for want of ardent spirits. The experiment has been made by myself and others, and its beneficial results are truly gratifying.


With a view to limiting their wants to their means of supplying them, and to secure the continuance of the trade, no credit must be allowed. If this rule be neglected, and a negro gets once in debt to his master, he will cease to trade with him, and should the master charge a profit on his goods, to prevent the business becoming a losing one from bad debts, all advantage over the regular stores, would thereby be lost. Each master should confine his trade to his own negroes, and have stated times at which his people may come and buy. How much their comfort is promoted by the facility with which they may thus exchange their surplus provisions, poultry, &c. for sugar, molasses, cheap cloth, domestic utensils, &c. need not be stated. It removes, too, a great temptation to visit dram shops, and affords the master an excellent opportunity of judging of the thrift of each negro, and detecting thefts in those who bring more than there can be good reason for believing that they have honestly obtained.

Another mode of encouraging good conduct is, to bestow extra supplies of good clothing. Besides the plantation allowance, let the master give, at stated times, fish, meat, rice, and also a few yards of shirting, a handkerchief, cap, or some such article. These will assist in supplying any deficiency in his ordinary food and apparel, and yet in case of misconduct may be withdrawn without any infringement of what is esteemed his lawful allowance, and this privation will be sensibly felt by the delinquent, when he sees others receiving the usual distributions.

The last incentive to well doing, I will present both masters and servants in the words of the Apostle:—‘Masters give unto your servants that which is *just and equal*, knowing that ye also have a master in heaven’—and then will you have servants, who will count their master worthy of all honor, and the name of God and his doctrine shall no more be blasphemed.

I have thus, my friends, in compliance with your assignment, endeavored to state what appear to me, some of the best regulations, for those anxious to improve the moral condition of the negroes. These remarks, you perceive, are intended

entirely for masters and overseers. I have not attempted to lay down any plan for ministers, except in those cases in which the duties of master and preacher are united in the same person. The system here recommended, has been tried under my own observation, and has realized my most sanguine expectations. It admits undoubtedly of much improvement, and has probably many defects, but such as it is, it is unreservedly submitted to your review.



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